

T-544

VIRGINIA W. (skipjack)  
Tilghman, Maryland

VIRGINIA W. is a 49' long two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a skipjack. She has a beam of 13.5', a depth of 3.3', and net registered tonnage of 5. She carries a typical skipjack rig of jib-headed mainsail and a single large jib with a club on its foot. Built in 1904 in Guilford, Virginia following traditional Bay design and construction methods, VIRGINIA W. is significant as being one of the 35 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjacks and a member of the last commercial sailing fleet in the United States. VIRGINIA W. is of special interest as being one of the older skipjacks and for being one of the 19 surviving working skipjacks to have been built previous to 1912.

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. T-544

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☒ no

CHESAPEAKE BAY SKIPJACK FLEET THEMATIC GROUP

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic VIRGINIA W

and/or common SKIPJACK

## 2. Location

street & number KNAPPS NARROWS

n/a not for publication

city, town Tilghman

n/a vicinity of

congressional district First

state Maryland 024

county Talbot 041

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Bob Marshall

street & number

telephone no.:

city, town Tilghman

state and zip code Maryland 21671

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

n/a

liber

street & number

folio

city, town

state

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title Survey of Surviving Traditional Chesapeake Bay Craft

date 1983-1984

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis

MD 21401

## 7. Description

Survey No. T-544

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☒ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved      date of move

n/a

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This vessel is a two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, with a typical skipjack rig. She measures 37.5 feet register length, which according to her owner means 49 feet on deck and 56 feet overall. Her beam is 13.5 feet, and she draws 3.3 feet with centerboard up, 6 feet with centerboard down. Originally built in 1904 in Guilford, Virginia by Harrison Lewis, she was extensively rebuilt in 1980-81, using predominately fir instead of the more usual local pine. She is cross-planked in typical Bay fashion. Fir was used for her sides, stem, stemline, and mast. The vessel is painted white.

VIRGINIA W. has a longhead bow, with an almost-plumb stem; she is square-sterned, with a well-raked transom with some tuck to the corners of the chine. Her rudder is carried inboard; according to her owner this is unusual in such a small skipjack, but it may also reflect the practices of the era in which she was built.

The vessel is flush-decked with several deck structures: a box over the steering gear on the afterdeck; a tall trunk cabin with a slide to port; and a main hatch. Other fittings include a wheel original to the boat, made by "J.W. Neilly, Balto."; new rollers; original davits and steering gear. The winders are powered by a 4-cylinder Wisconsin air-cooled engine, located amidships. The pushboat, carried on davits, is 11 feet long by 4½ feet wide, and is powered by a 6-cylinder Ford engine; there is a jig for it centered on the transom.

The single mast is set up with little rake, rigged with double shrouds and turnbuckles, a forestay, and a jibstay. The boom, which is jawed to the mast, is new and of Norwegian spruce. The bowsprit, squared on top with wood runner-grips along its length, ends at a square sampson post; it is set up with chain bowsprit shrouds and a double chain bobstay. The rig is typical of skipjacks: a jib-headed dacron mainsail, laced to the boom and carried on wood mast-hoops, and a single large dacron jib with a small club on its foot.

The vessel is decorated with trailboards: the name VIRGINIA W. in gold on a green background, with motifs of eagles and arrows, flags, a red-white-and-blue shield, all surrounded in black and gold.

## 8. Significance

Survey No. T-544

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates      1904      Builder/Architect      Harrison Lewis

check: Applicable Criteria: ☒ A   ☐ B   ☒ C   ☐ D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A   ☐ B   ☐ C   ☐ D   ☐ E   ☐ F   ☐ G   ☒ none

Level of Significance: ☒ national   ☐ state   ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This vessel is significant as being one of the 36 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjacks and a member of the last commercial sailing fleet in the United States. Out of a fleet of hundreds of skipjacks that worked Bay waters in the early years of this century, today only this small number remain to carry on the tradition of working sail.

The skipjack evolved as a distinct type of Bay vessel in the 1890's as a cheaper-to-construct alternative to the earlier bugeyes and other traditional framed craft, in a period when shipbuilding costs were rising and the oyster catch was diminishing. The type was devised by enlarging (to 25 to 60 feet) the hull of the ordinary, unframed, square-sterned Bay crabbing skiff, and giving it a deadrise bottom, a-deck, a cabin, and a sloop rig. The result—with its unframed, hard chine, cross-planked, V-bottom—proved inexpensive to build, easy to repair, and could be constructed by a competent house carpenter. Skipjacks were specifically designed as oyster dredge boats, with wide beams and low freeboard lending stability and providing a large working space on deck. The single masted rig, with sharp-headed mainsail and large jib, was easy to handle, powerful in light winds, and handy in coming about quickly for another pass over the oyster beds.

The Maryland oyster season begins November 1 and ends March 15. Skipjacks must dredge under sail on all days except Mondays and Tuesdays, when they are allowed to use their motorized pushboat for dredging. The pushboat, normally carried on davits at the stern, is lowered into the water and literally "pushes" the skipjack along from behind, the nose of the pushboat resting against a "jig" on the stern of the skipjack. The pushboat can also legally be used to get the skipjack to and from the oyster beds each day. Each skipjack's crew is made up of the captain, who is often also the owner, and five crew members.

VIRGINIA W. is of interest as being one of the older skipjacks still dredging in the Chesapeake fleet. She was built in 1904 in Guilford, Va. by Harrison Lewis following traditional Bay-area design and construction methods. She has worked in the oyster dredging fleet since her building and is presently based at Tilghman Island. The vessel is one of the 21 surviving working skipjacks to have been built previous to 1912, although like most, she has been extensively repaired. VIRGINIA W. was extensively rebuilt by her owner Tim Sterns in 1980-81 and like the STANLEY NORMAN is an example of a "nearly dead" vessel being brought back to life as an active oyster dredge boat. She is small for a skipjack and was built as a "100-bushel boat," meaning she can carry a 100 bushels of oysters on her deck.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. T-544

See Thematic Group nomination cover form, Continuation Sheets  
No. 8-13.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acreQuadrangle name Tilghman, MDQuadrangle scale 1:24000UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A 

1	8
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3	8	4	0	4	0
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4	2	8	6	2	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

This working vessel is usually docked at the location indicated in  
Item 2. Historic boundaries are coterminous with the hull.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	n/a	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/ M. E. Haywardorganization Radcliffe Maritime Museum  
Maryland Historical Societydate May, 1984street & number 201 West Monument Streettelephone (301) 685-3750city or town Baltimorestate Maryland 21201

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by  
an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated  
Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and  
record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of  
individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Shaw House  
21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 269-2438

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. T-544

Magi No. 2105445733

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic VIRGINIA W

and/or common Shipjack

## 2. Location

street &amp; number Knapps Narrows

☐ not for publication

city, town Tilghman

☐ vicinity of

congressional district

state Maryland

county

Talbot

## 3. Classification

**Category**☐ district  
☐ building(s)  
☐ structure  
☒ site  
☒ object**Ownership**☐ public  
☒ private  
☐ both**Public Acquisition**☐ in process  
☐ being considered  
☒ not applicable**Status**☒ occupied  
☐ unoccupied  
☐ work in progress**Accessible**☒ yes: restricted  
☐ yes: unrestricted  
☐ no**Present Use**☐ agriculture  
☒ commercial  
☐ educational  
☐ entertainment  
☐ government  
☐ industrial  
☐ military☐ museum  
☐ park  
☐ private residence  
☐ religious  
☐ scientific  
☒ transportation  
☐ other:

## 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Bob Marshall

street &amp; number

telephone no.:

city, town Tilghman

state and zip code Maryland 21671

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

liber

street &amp; number

folio

city, town

state

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date

☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

## 7. Description

Survey No. T-544

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☒ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☐ original site  
☐ moved      date of move \_\_\_\_\_

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Survey No. T-544

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<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

<b>Specific dates</b>	1904	<b>Builder/Architect</b>	Harrison Lewis
check: Applicable Criteria:	<input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D		
and/or			
Applicable Exception:	<input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G		
Level of Significance:	<input type="checkbox"/> national <input type="checkbox"/> state <input type="checkbox"/> local		

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. T-544

Howard I. Chapelle, American Small Sailing Craft (New York: W.W. Norton, 1951)H.I. Chapelle, Chesapeake Bay Skipjacks (St. Michaels, Md: CBMM, n.d.)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A 

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Zone Easting NorthingB 

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Zone Easting NorthingC 

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Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/ M.E. Hayward

organization Maryland Historical Society

date 5/84

street &amp; number 201 W. Monument St.

telephone 685-3750

city or town Baltimore

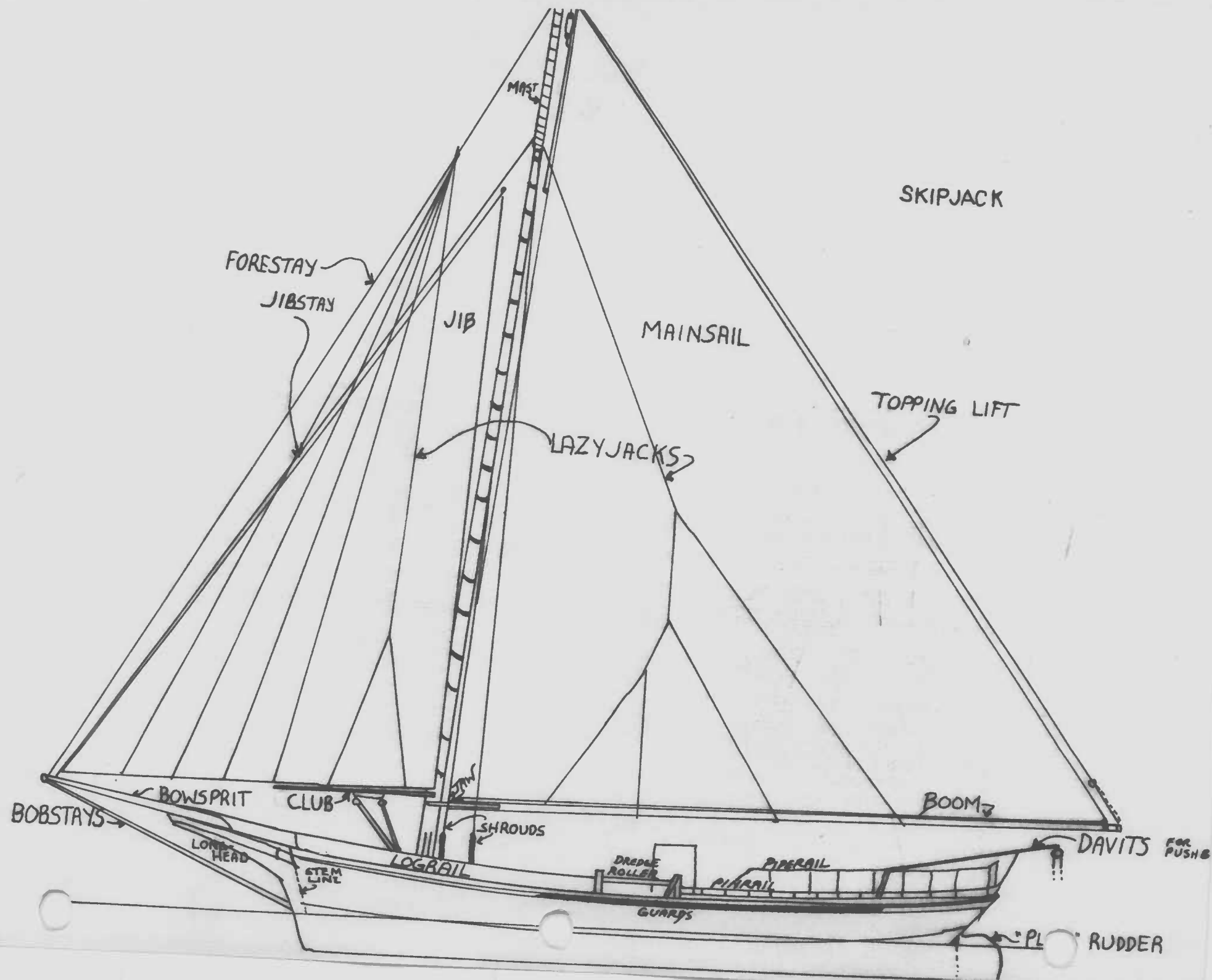
state Maryland 21201

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return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Shaw House  
21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 269-2438

T-544





402-25

T-544

VIRGINIA W.  
Tilghman, Md.

Port side - bow  
M.C. Wootton 7/84

90°



402-28

T-544

VIRGINIA W.  
Tilghman, Md.

Port side - stern  
M.C. Wootton 7/84



T-544

VIRGINIA W.  
Tilghman, Md.

Port side - bow  
M.C. Wootton 7/84

402-23